

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 22635 01 OF 05 042106Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /073 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3630

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CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 22635 01 OF 05 042106Z

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 PARIS 22635

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR PINT

SUBJECT: FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE -- JULY 1976

REF: PARIS 20143

SUMMARY: IN FRANCE, POLITICS SHUTS DOWN IN AUGUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE; THE MONTH OF JULY IS THUS AN INTERSTICE BETWEEN THE CLOSING OF PARLIAMENT AND PREPARATION FOR SUN'N'SURF. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE BIGGEST "EVENT" OF THE MONTH IS A RUMOR: THE POSSIBILITY OF PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S LEAVING MATIGNON. OTHERWISE THERE HAVE BEEN HARD BARGAINING AMONG DIVERSE FACTIONS OF BOTH MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION FOR CANDIDATES IN THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, MORE PROBLEMS IN CORSICA, AND AN AMUSING MARXO/CHRISTIAN POLEMIC BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE BISHOP OF STRASBOURG. THE DROUGHT HAS TAKEN ON HEAVIER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS, WITH BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT PROVISIONALLY ALLIED IN THEIR CALLS FOR EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT ACTION. CROSS-PARTY CONTACT WAS ALSO EVIDENT IN A NUMBER OF OTHER WAYS, LENDING CREDENCE TO THE SPECULATION THAT THE FRENCH POLITICAL SPECTRUM COULD BE MODIFYING ITSELF SLIGHTLY. IN-PARTY DIFFERENCES OVER A NUMBER OF ISSUES CONTINUE TO MAKE NEWS, BUT THERE REMAINS LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT THESE DIFFERENCES WILL LEAD FOR THE PRESENT TO IMPORTANT REALIGNMENTS. POLLS BROUGHT THEIR USUAL BAD NEWS TO THE MAJORITY, BUT NOT SO BAD AS THE NEWS THAT CONVICTED CHILD-KILLER CHRISTIAN RANUCCI GOT ON JULY 21 WHEN THE PRESIDENT REFUSED HIS APPEAL FOR GRACE. RANUCCI'S BEHEADING A WEEK LATER PROVOKED AN OUTCRY FROM THE OPPOSITION AND SOME OF VGE'S OWN MAJORITY, UNDERSCORING THE PRESIDENT'S DILEMMA IN DEALING WITH SUSPICION OR HOSTILITY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL FENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. JACQUES CHIRAC IN LIMBO: THUS WAS HEADLINED A RECENT PAINFULLY ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF THE PM'S CURRENT POSITION. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 22635 01 OF 05 042106Z

TION. CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DEVIL OF THE UDR AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA OF THE ELYSEE, CHIRAC WOULD SEEM TO HAVE NOWHERE TO GO BUT DOWN...AND OUT. MOST OF HIS OWN PARTY CONSIDERS HIM THE HOPE OF TOMORROW (WHILE AT THE SAME TIME REMAINING SUSPICIOUS OF HIS GISCARDIAN TENDENCIES), AND WOULD NOT BE PARTICULARLY VEXED TO SEE HIM LEAVE MATIGNON AND HOLD HIMSELF IN RESERVE FOR THE GOOD OF FRANCE, AS ANY GOOD GAULLIST SHOULD DO. IN ADDITION, FRENCH PRESI-

DENTS HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF CHUCKING PRIME MINISTERS AFTER TWO YEARS IN SERVICE, AND RECENT RUMORS WOULD SEEM TO CONFIRM THAT PATTERN (PARIS 21978). HOWEVER, IT IS PROBABLY NOT IN CHIRAC'S (NOR THE PRESIDENT'S) POLITICAL INTERESTS TO LEAVE MATIGNON NOW AND GO INTO A REAL LIMBO, WAITING FOR A DISASTER AFTER THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, OR FOR NEXT PRESIDENTIAL RACE IN 1981. NOR WOULD IT BE IN CHIRAC'S CHARACTER TO DO SO.

2. BUT IF...: THE POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER SLIGHT, REMAINS NONETHELESS; AND THE PARIS POLITICAL BEEHIVE WAS HUMMING IN JULY WITH SPECULATION OVER THE CONSEQUENCES. CHABAN-DELMAS WOULD RETURN, STILLING THE FEARS OF HESITANT GAULLISTS AND EVEN BRINGING WITH HIM THE SUPPORT OF A FEW MODERATE OPPOSITION TYPES. OLIVIER GUICHARD WOULD TAKE THE JOB, OR MICHEL DEBRE MAKE A TRIUMPHANT RETURN (THOUGH BOTH MEN HAVE ALLEGEDLY REFUSED); MINISTER OF

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PAGE 01 PARIS 22635 02 OF 05 042108Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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PAGE 02 PARIS 22635 02 OF 05 042108Z

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 05 PARIS 22635

PUBLIC WORKS GALLEY, OR MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE BARRE.
THEN THERE'S THE (MINISTER OF JUSTICE, CENTRIST)
LECANUET THEORY, THE (MINISTER OF LABOR, CENTRIST)
DURAFOR THEORY, AND THE (FINANCE MINISTER, IR) FOURCADE
THEORY, ALL OF THEM MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATES.
MANY OBSERVERS, THOUGH NONE OF THEM GAULLIST POLITICIANS,
BELIEVE THAT WERE CHIRAC TO LEAVE, THE UDR WOULD SPLIT
DOWN THE MIDDLE, WITH THE "GISCARDIANS" STAYING LOYAL TO
THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY AND THE REST FOLLOWING PIED
PIPER CHIRAC OFF INTO SOME KIND OF TEMPORARY POLITICAL
AMALGAM FLOATING BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT. THERE IS A
CERTAIN PETULANT FRUSTRATION IN THOSE TRYING TO READ THE
CRYSTAL BALL; BUT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ODDS
ARE ON THE PM'S REMAINING IN PLACE FOR SOME TIME TO
COME, IN SPITE OF A CABINET SHAKEUP EXPECTED IN LATE
AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER.

3. THE MAJORITY: THE MAJORITY'S SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT
ACT OF THE MONTH WAS FOR ONCE ONE OF COORDINATION. ON
JULY 22 JACQUES CHIRAC ANNOUNCED THAT THE FOUR MAJORITY
FORMATIONS (UDR, IR, CENTRE DES DEMOCRATS SOCIAUX, RADI-
CAUX SOCIALISTS) WERE IN AGREEMEHT OH WHAT CAHDIDATE TO
RUN FOR MAYOR IN 238 CITIES, OUT OF A TOTAL OF APPROXI-

MATELY 500, WITH A POPULATION OVER 20,000. WHILE FUTURE CONFRONTATIONS ARE INEVITABLE, THE OUTLOOK IS FOR COOPERATION AND COMPROMISE IN NEARLY ALL CASES. THE UDR STAMPED ITS FEET ONCE AGAIN OVER MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR PONIATOWSKI'S PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD (OF VOTES NEEDED ON THE FIRST ROUND OF AN ELECTION TO ALLOW RUNNING IN THE SECOND ROUND) FROM 10 PERCENT TO 15 PERCENT. BUT CHIRAC CALLED THE BOYS TOGETHER FOR A LUNCH IN THE BOIS DE BOULOGNE AND LO, 24 HOURS LATER THE ASSEMBLY VOTED A COMPROMISE 12.5 PERCENT BILL (PARIS 19923). NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS KIND OF STREET-CORNER BAR-GAINING DID NOT ENHANCE THE MAJORITY'S PUBLIC IMAGE WITH

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PAGE 03 PARIS 22635 02 OF 05 042108Z

THOSE WHO FOLLOW THIS SORT OF GAME. OTHERWISE IR LEADER DOMINATI AND THE UDR SEEM TO HAVE BURIED THE HATCHET, FOR A WHILE AT LEAST, OVER WHO WOULD RUN FOR MAYOR OF PARIS: DOMINATI APPEARS THE CURRENT FAVORITE.

4. ATTEMPTING TO REASSERT ITSELF, HOWEVER, THE UDR OCCASIONALLY WORKS AGAINST ITS OWN INTERESTS, ALMOST OUT OF HUBRIS IN KEEPING WITH ITS PAST. WHEN CLAUDE LABBE, FOR EXAMPLE, LEADER OF THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, DECLARED IN MID-JULY THAT "WE CAN BLOCK THE WHOLE SYSTEM," OR WHEN HE WARNS THAT UNLESS THE ELYSEE PROVES MORE ACCOMMODATING IT WILL BE A HOT FALL SESSION IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, HE IS SIDESTEPPING THE PLAIN FACT THAT "OPPOSITION" GAULLISTS ARE FEW IN NUMBER AND HAVE LITTLE NATIONAL BASE OR POWER. THE UDR WILL REMAIN IN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY, ALBEIT AS A KIND OF SLOVENLY PETER STICKING NEEDLES THROUGH THE PRESIDENT'S BUTTERFLIES. AS A SIGN OF WHERE THINGS STAND THE PARTY IS PLANNING TO RUN ERIC TABARLY, WINNER OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SAILBOAT RACE, AND GUY DRUT, GOLD MEDALLIST IN THE OLYMPIC 110-METER HURDLES, IN FUTURE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY'RE NEUTRAL HEADLINE-MAKERS. THE GENERAL MUST BE LOOKING DOWN ON ALL THIS IN WRATH.

5. THE LEFT: FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE FOR THE MOMENT PRESENTING MORE OF A PROBLEM TO THE LEFT THAN TO THE MAJORITY. NOT YET AT THE STAGE OF ACTUAL COORDINATION, THE PS, THE PC, THE LEFT RADICALS AND SEGMENTS OF THE PSU (UNIFIED LEFT SOCIALISTS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE FAR LEFT) HAVE "REACHED ACCORD FOR OPENING NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD UNIFIED LISTS AT THE DEPARTMENT FEDERATION LEVEL." WHILE A MAJORITY OF COMMUNISTS ARE SATISFIED TO SEE THE POSSIBILITY FOR THE FIRST TIME OF WIDESPREAD ASSOCIATION IN THE TOWN HALLS THAT THE UNITED LEFT MIGHT EVENTUALLY RUN, A NUMBER OF PARTY MEMBERS ARE OFFENDED BY THIS SUPPOSED "CAPITULATION" BEFORE THE PS.

THE PS ON THE OTHER HAND IS CONTENT; MITTERRAND WENT ON
TELEVISION ON JULY 29 TO DECLARE HIS SATISFACTION OVER
THE FORTHCOMING NATIONAL ACCORD, "ONE WE (PS) PROPOSED,"
HE ADDED MALICIOUSLY. THE PS ITSELF, ASIDE FROM HOLDING
ALREADY DIFFERENT OPINIONS OVER DEFENSE, EUROPE, THE
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PAGE 04 PARIS 22635 02 OF 05 042108Z

COMMON PROGRAM, ETC., WAS WITNESS DURING JULY TO THE
BIRTH OF A NEW "LEFT" TENDENCY. PIERRE JOXE, A PARTY
TROUBLEMAKER FROM WAY BACK (HE HAS OPENLY DIFFERED WITH
MITTERRAND'S EUROPEAN POLICY AND ON PARTY RELATIONS WITH
THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED CGT LABOR UNION), DEPLORED IN A
RECENT ARTICLE THE LACK OF "DEMOCRATIC DEBATE" WITHIN
THE PARTY STRUCTURE AND HAS FOUNDED A NEW REVIEW, "POUR
L'UNION," TO OPEN UP DEBATE. SOME SEE THIS AS A BYZAN-

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PAGE 01 PARIS 22635 03 OF 05 042121Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /073 W

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CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 22635 03 OF 05 042121Z

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 05 PARIS 22635

TINE EFFORT ON MITTERRAND'S PART TO OFFSET CERES, NOW ESTIMATED TO BE AS MUCH AS 35 PERCENT OF THE PS, AND OTHERS AS A GENUINE WISH FOR DIALOGUE ON JOXE'S PART (OR EVEN A WISH TO HAVE THE PARTY TAKE GREATER NOTICE OF HIM). THE TRUTH WOULD SEEM TO CONTAIN SOME OR ALL OF THESE THEORIES.

6. ELSEWHERE ON THE LEFT THERE WERE SIGNS OF CONTACT WITH THE MAJORITY. MRG LEADER RCBERT FABRE MET WITH UDR DEPUTY NUNGESSER. SHADOW PS FOREIGN MINISTER ROBERT PONTILLON CALLED ON CHIRAC'S DIRECTEUR DU CABINET, OSTENSIBLY TO DISCUSS LEBANON; AND PS NATIONAL SECRETARY CHEVENEMENT SENT OUT MORE FEELERS TO DISSIDENT GAULLISTS, THOUGH THIS LAST COULD HARDLY BE CALLED BRIDGE-BUILDING BETWEEN THE MAJORITY AND THE OPPOSITION. VGE SHOULD BE HAPPY--HE'S BEEN CALLING FOR "DECRISPATION," A QUIETING OF TROUBLED POLITICAL WATERS, FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS. THE FRUIT OF ALL THIS WAS THE REAPPEARANCE AT THE MONTH'S END OF ANOTHER BIG RUMOR: THAT OF AN INVITATION FROM GISCARD TO MITTERRAND TO COME TO THE ELYSEE AROUND THE END OF OCTOBER (YVES CANNAC, UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL AT

THE ELYSEE, IS ALLEGEDLY PREPARING FOR SUCH A MEETING AT THE PRESENT). WE THINK A MEETING POSSIBLE (SEE BELOW).

7. "YOU MAY TAKE ONE GIAHT STEP": THE POSSIBILITY OF A GISCARDIAN/SOCIALIST "UNDERSTANDING," AS SEEN ABOVE, WAS EVIDENT IN A NUMBER OF WAYS DURING JULY. THE THESIS, HOWEVER REMOTE AT THE PRESENT, MERITS ATTENTION. BEHIND GISCARD'S EFFORTS TO PRESIDENTIALIZE THE CURRENT REGIME LIES THE VERY REAL CHANCE THAT HE HAS READ THE WINDSOCK WITH REALISM: THE LEFT (READ PS) IS INELUCTABLY ADVANCING, AND CERTAIN OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT IS TRYING TO RISE ABOVE IT ALL AND PREPARE HIMSELF FOR SOME KIND OF WORKING COMPROMISE IN 1978. THIS EVENTUALITY SEEMS TO BE SHARED BY JEAN LECANUET, THE RADICAL SOCIAL-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 22635 03 OF 05 042121Z

ISTS AND THE PROGRESSIVE WING, PERHAPS 30 PERCENT OF HIS OWN INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY. THE PRESENCE OF JEAN SERISE IN THE ELYSEE AND THE OPENLY EXPRESSED FEARS OF GAULLISTS DO NOT BELIE THE POSSIBILITY. GISCARD HAS JSUT REPLACED THE "WORLDLY LEFTIST" (GAUCHIST MONDAIN) PIERRE-BROSSOLETTE AT THE ELYSEE WITH AN AVOWED "EUROPEAN" (PARIS 21977), WHICH COULD BE READ AS BOTH A NOD TO LIBERAL SOCIALISTS AND AN ACCOMMODATION FOR CONSERVATIVES. "GISCARD," SAY SOME, "IS MORE SECRETIVE THAN DE GAULLE."

8. THE RAINS CAME: BUT TOO LATE--JUST IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES TO DAMPEN PUBLIC INTEREST IN DROUGHT REPORTS. DAMAGE FIGURES COVER A GAMUT WIDE ENOUGH TO DRIVE A TRACTOR THROUGH, BUT A FIGURE OF DAMAGE TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF 1.8 TO 2.2 BILLION DOLLARS APPEARS REASONABLE. STILL SEEMING TO CARRY HIS FORMER AGRICULTURAL PORTFOLIO (SEE PARA 11 BELOW), CHIRAC PROMISED THE FARMERS TO MAINTAIN THEIR INCOME AT LAST YEAR'S LEVELS--BUT GOF DEFERRED ANY ACCOUNTING TO SEPTEMBER 29. AS THIS DATE APPROACHES, THE NUMBERS GAME WILL BECOME A HOTTER ISSUE, WITH FARMERS CALLING FOR MORE HEIP AND THE GOF WORRYING OVER THE INFLATIONARY IMPACT. EARLY IN THE MONTH THE UDR CALLED FOR A "GREEN LOAN" TO HELP FARMERS IN DISTRESS. EVER-ACTIVE PIERRE JOXE, PS AGRICULTURAL EXPERT, LATER DEMANDED A CRASH GRANT OF ONE BILLION DOLLARS TO CATTLE RAISERS TO AVOID DISTRESS SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS FACING EMPTY HAYLOFTS THIS WINTER. JOXE CALLED THE DELAY TO THE END OF SEPTEMBER PSYCHOLOGICALLY INSUPPORTABLE FOR FARMERS AND A SERIOUS MISTAKE FOR THE NATIONAL ECONOMY. AS THE PRESIDENT SETS OFF TO BAG GAME IN THE ZAIRE PRESERVES, A GROWING RIPPLE OF INDIGNATION IS APPARENT IN FRANCE (THOUGH WITH THIRTEEN MILLION FRENCHMEN OFF FOR THE AUGUST HOLIDAYS,

CRITICS SHOULD START FEELING FOR BEAMS IN THEIR OWN EYES).

9. RECONCILE THE UNRECONCILABLE: REFERRING TO PCF LEADER GEORGE MARCHAIS' JUNE 20 APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS (TO REEVALUATE THE PARTY), MONSIGNOR ELCHINGER, BISHOP OF STRASBOURG, CALLED MARCHAIS' CARROT THE HERESY OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PARIS 22635 03 OF 05 042121Z

THE CENTURY, AND VIGOROUSLY DENOUNCED "ELEVATING CLASS STRUGGLE TO THE LEVEL OF RELIGION." HE THUS ATTEMPTED TO UNDERCUT THE PCF'S LONGSTANDING EFFORT TO ATTRACT MORE CHRISTIANS. NATURALLY THE PARTY WAS NOT LONG IN REPLYING, ACCUSING MONSIGNOR ELCHINGER OF MANICHEANISM, OF CUTTING FRANCE IN HALF, OF REFLECTING HIS OWN OPINION AND NOT THAT OF THE FRENCH EPISCOPATE. RENE ANDRIEU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE COMMUNIST DAILY HUMANITE, WALKED

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PAGE 01 PARIS 22635 04 OF 05 042120Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /073 W
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R 042120Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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PAGE 02 PARIS 22635 04 OF 05 042120Z

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 05 PARIS 22635

A CAREFUL LINE, HOWEVER, FOR AN OFFENSE TO THE CHURCH WOULD DO THE PARTY LITTLE GOOD. THIS MEDIEVAL DEBATE AMUSED POLITICAL CIRCLES FOR EXACTLY ONE WEEK (11 JULY/ 18 JULY) BEFORE DISAPPEARING.

10. CORSICA: EVER IN THE NEWS, CORSICA IS AN EXTRA WORRY TO AN ALREADY HARASSED MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. THE FRONT FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERATION OF CORSICA HAS PROMISED TO ASSERT ITSELF IN AUGUST, CONDEMNING AT THE SAME TIME ITS MORE MODERATE COLLEAGUE, THE ASSOCIATION OF CORSICAN PATRIOTS. BOMBS WENT OFF AS USUAL, WITH AN ESPECIALLY VICIOUS SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS DURING THE NIGHT OF JULY 17. MEANWHILE GEORGES MARCHAIS GOT IN THE ACT BY CONDEMNING CORSICAN AUTONOMISTS, AND WAS IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED BY STATE SECRETARY FOR OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS AND TERRITORIES OLIVIER STIRN, WHO ACCUSED THE PCF LEADER OF APPLYING ONE SET OF STANDARDS TO CORSICA AND ANOTHER TO FRENCH OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS (WHERE THE PC LEADER ADVOCATES INCREASED AUTONOMY, IF NOT INDEPENDENCE). NOTE:

IT IS BELIEVED THAT AMERICAN-MANUFACTURED M-79 ROCKET LAUNCHERS ARE BEING USED BY THE ISLAND AUTONOMISTS. THE COURT FOR STATE SECURITY, THE SAME THAT TRIED EDMOND SIMEONI (PARIS 23207) HAS OPENED AN INVESTIGATION.

11. POLLS: ONCE AGAIN POLLS GAVE THE MAJORITY THE GRIEF. ON JULY 20 FIGARO-SOFRES SHOWED A WEAKENING OF

THE UDR AND CONCOMITANT STRENGTHENING OF THE PS. THE CONCLUSION IS THAT THAT FRACTION OF THE GAULLIST ELEC-

TORATE DISSATISFIED WITH JACQUES CHIRAC IS MOVING INTO MITTERRAND'S CAMP. INTERESTINGLY, HOWEVER, A LITTLE-NOTICED POLL, REQUESTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHED IN "MINUTE" ON JULY 21, SHOWED POPULARITY FOR THE PM VERY SOLIDLY INSTALLED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AMONG THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 22635 04 OF 05 042120Z

MIDDLE CLASS AND WITH FARMERS. OTHERWISE AN IFOP POLL AT THE END OF THE MONTH WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT RECENT PCF PROPAGANDA EFFORTS COULD BE PAYING OFF. NO LESS THAN 56 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED INDICATED THEY WOULD BE GLAD OF (22 PERCENT) OR INDIFFERENT TO (34 PERCENT) THE EVENTUAL PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNISTS IN GOF. FINALLY, A JULY 28 SOFRES SHOWED 48 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE BELIEVING THAT MITTERRAND COULD NOT LAST AS PRIME MINISTER UNDER VGE, AND 55 PERCENT BELIEVING THAT MITTERRAND WOULD RAPIDLY APPLY THE BASIC ELEMENTS

OF THE COMMON PROGRAM. IT IS EVIDENT THAT A GREAT NUMBER OF HITHERTO CONSERVATIVE FRENCHMEN ARE BEGINNING TO "THINK LEFT."

12. CONCLUSION: AT THIS TIME IN FRANCE THERE SEEM TO BE TWO BASIC EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHY MORE AND MORE OF THE ELECTORATE IS GOING SOCIALIST. ONE EXPLANATION, POPU-

LAR AMONG CERTAIN CENTRISTS AND THE MAJORITY OF THOSE ALREADY SITUATED WITHIN THE LEFT, IS THAT THE PRESIDENT, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, IS A CONSERVATIVE, A MAN CONTENT WITH TINSEL AND GLOSS, UNWILLING TO MAKE THE HARD REFORMS CURRENTLY NEEDED. THE OTHER THEORY, POPULAR AMONG GAULLISTS AND CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS, IS THAT THE PRESIDENT IS HIMSELF A QUASI-SOCIALIST WHO HAS BEEN PREPARING FOR SOME KIND OF ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PS EVER SINCE HIS ELECTION. THEY BELIEVE GISCARD'S ULTIMATE WISH IS TO BE THE MAN WHO BREAKS THE COMMON PROGRAM. NATURALLY THERE ARE VARIATIONS. SOME UDR LEADERS, FOR EXAMPLE, THINK GISCARD LOATHES THEM SO MUCH THAT HE'D SELL OUT TO THE LEFT JUST TO BREAK

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PAGE 01 PARIS 22635 05 OF 05 042126Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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PAGE 02 PARIS 22635 05 OF 05 042126Z

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 05 OF 05 PARIS 22635

THE GAULLIST POWER BLOC. WHATEVER, MORE AND MORE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN FRANCE SEEM RECONCILED TO A VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN 1978. AT THE SAME TIME, 1978 IS A LONG WAY OFF, AND THE ADAGE MAY STILL PROVE TRUE THAT IN FRANCE "PEOPLE THINK LEFT DURING THE WEEK BUT VOTE RIGHT ON SUNDAY."

13. A MINOR CASE TO ILLUSTRATE THE PRESIDENT'S DILEMMA OCCURRED AT THE MONTH'S END WITH THE BEHEADING OF KIDNAPPER/MURDERER CHRISTIAN RANUCCI, THE FIRST USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN FRANCE SINCE MAY 1973. MANY OBSERVERS AND POLITICIANS WERE QUICK TO CITE GISCARD'S 1974 CAMPAIGN SPEECHES, IN WHICH HE EXPRESSED A "PROFOUND AVERSION FOR THE DEATH PENALTY." THEY ACCUSED THE PRESIDENT OF HAVING GIVEN WAY TO POLITICAL PRESSURES AND TO INCREASING EXPRESSIONS IN FAVOR OF THE DEATH PENALTY AMONG FRENCHMEN (THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF HIGHLY PUBLICIZED KIDNAPPINGS AND MURDERS OF CHILDREN IN FRANCE DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS). HAD THE PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, EXERCISED HIS PREROGATIVE TO PARDON THE CONDEMNED MAN, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST AS VIOLENTLY ACCUSED OF CEDING TO "LEFTIST" PHILOSOPHY REGARDING CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, OF FEARING TO SHOW A STRONG HAND WHERE THE SITUATION WARRANTED. THE FRENCH POLITICAL PSYCHE SEEMS KEYED UP FOR SOME KIND OF CHANGE, OR AT LEAST A DEMONSTRATION OF ENERGY AND FORCE ON VGE'S PART; YET WHEN THESE DEMONSTRATIONS OCCUR, THEY ARE OFTEN SEVERELY ATTACKED. CRITICS DISMISS HIS TINY 1974 MANDATE AS A REASON OR EXCUSE FOR HESITANCY, AND WISH HIM TO CARRY OUT CHANGES IN THE GRAND MANNER OF CHARLES DE GAULLE. MORE AND MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT UNLESS GISCARD "GETS GOING" THE LEFT WILL WIN IN 1978 AND CARRY OUT THE REFORMS THAT ARE NEEDED.

14. THERE WILL BE NO POLITICAL WRAP-UP FOR AUGUST. THE
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PAGE 03 PARIS 22635 05 OF 05 042126Z

NEXT ONE WILL BE AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER.
GAMMON

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